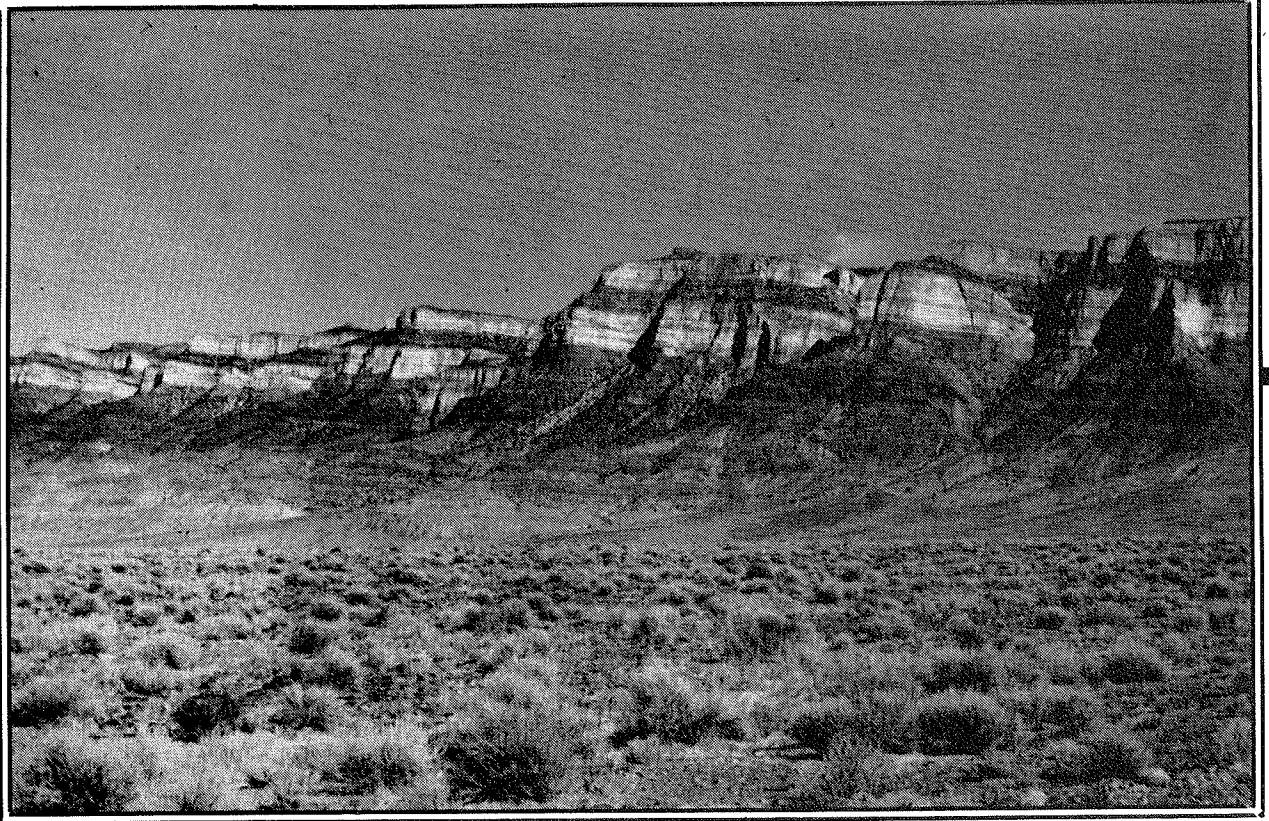


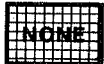





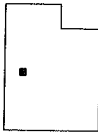
Howell Peak WSA



HOWELL PEAK WSA

Howell Peak WSA Proposal UT-050-077

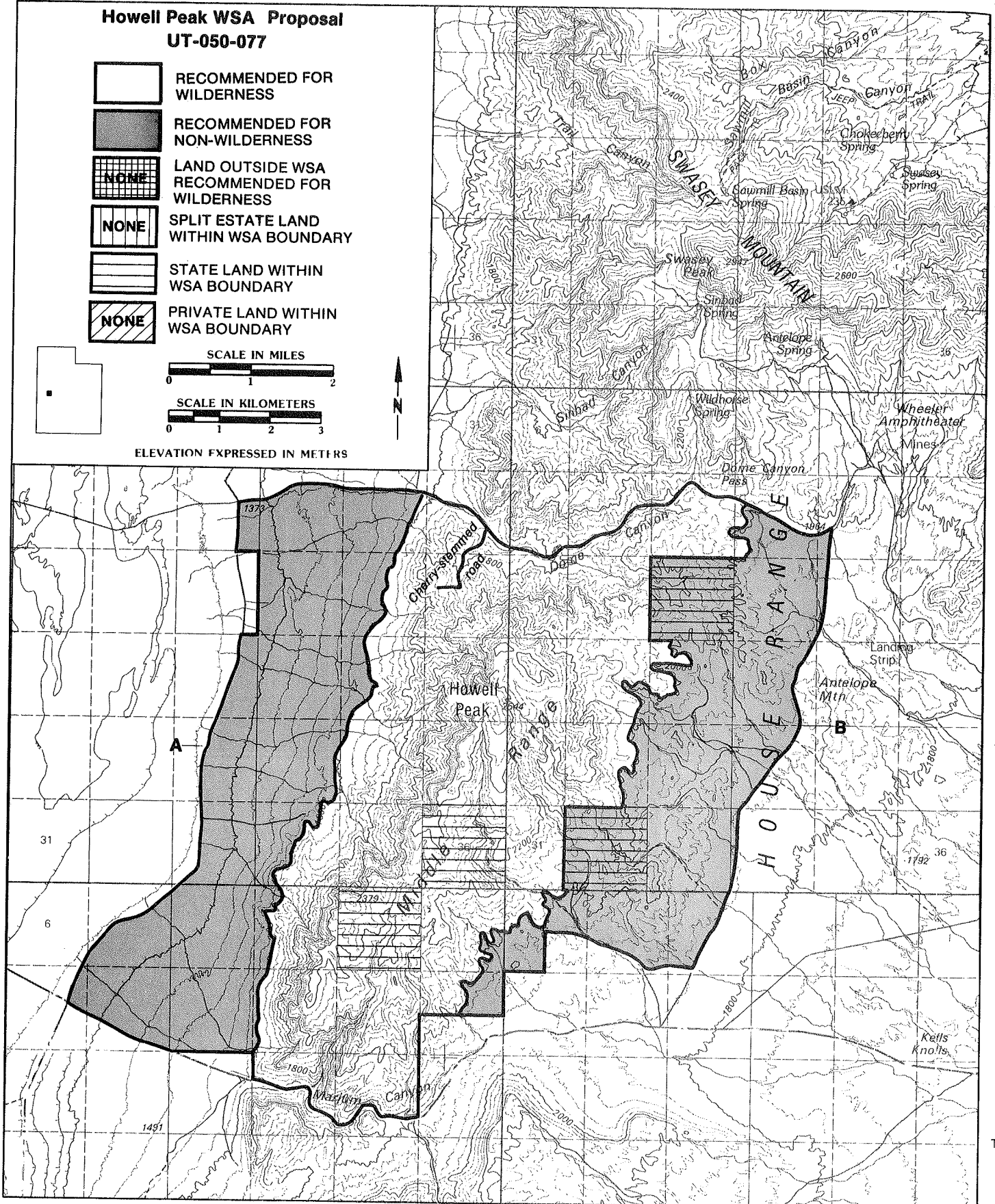
-  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  RECOMMENDED FOR NON-WILDERNESS
-  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  SPLIT ESTATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  STATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  PRIVATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



SCALE IN MILES
0 1 2

SCALE IN KILOMETERS
0 1 2 3

ELEVATION EXPRESSED IN METERS



R. 14 W.

R. 13 W.

October 1991

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 24,800 acres

The Howell Peak Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-050-077) is in the House Range, in northwestern Millard County, about 45 miles west of Delta, Utah (population 1,930). The study area is roughly a parallelogram about 8 miles from north to south and 8 miles from east to west (see Map). It includes 24,800 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and four sections (2,559 acres) of State land (see Table 1). Two sections (1,279 acres) of State land are in the portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness. No private or split-estate lands are in the WSA. Improved and unimproved roads partly delimit the WSA on all sides except the southeast, where

the boundary has been drawn on section and subsection lines. The WSA is surrounded mostly by public lands. The boundary of the partial wilderness alternative is along roads and, on the east and west sides, along contour lines which mark a change in slope between the alluvial fans that form the foothills and the steeper, mountainous area. On the east side, the boundary also excludes State lands. The Swasey Mountain WSA (UT-050-061) is directly to the north, separated by a road and Notch Peak WSA (UT-050-078) is directly to the south.

Elevations in the WSA range from about 5,000 feet at the edges of the WSA to the crest of Howell Peak (8,348 feet), and Antelope Peak (7,805 feet). Shrubs

**TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA^a**

WITHIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	24,800
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	2,559
Total	27,359
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within WSA)	14,800
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	14,800
In-holdings (State, private)	1,279
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	10,000
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	10,000
In-holdings (State, Private)	1,280

Source: BLM File Data

^a The Appendix is a detailed table of in-holdings included within the portion of the WSA recommended for designation.

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

and grasses are the dominant vegetation at lower elevations with pinyon-juniper woodland at higher elevations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative, where 14,800 acres would be designated as wilderness and the remaining 10,000 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report; a no wilderness (no action) alternative; and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 14,800 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 10,000 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 14,800 acres as wilderness and to release the remaining 10,000 acres for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. This recommendation for wilderness will also apply to any additional in-holding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. The Appendix lists all in-holdings in the recommended portion and provides information on acquisition.

The recommendation is for the central, highest and most mountainous portion of the WSA, which includes the best wilderness values, to be designated as wilderness. All of the area recommended for wilderness designation is natural and has outstanding opportunities for solitude, but opportunities for primitive recreation are not outstanding. No conflict with other uses exist.

The portion of the WSA that is not recommended for wilderness designation

(Areas A and B) is mostly foothills and benchlands that lack scenic values and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and have little variety in form or color. Wilderness designation of this portion of the WSA could impose constraints on livestock management, mining, and recreational fossil collecting.

3. CRITERIA USED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. Essentially all of the WSA meets the naturalness criteria of the Wilderness Act. Approximately 7 miles of ways at lower elevations in the WSA are substantially unnoticeable. Mineral exploration activities included 2,000 feet of road. This disturbance was permitted under a grandfathered right, has since been abandoned and has not been rehabilitated.

The numerous caves trilobite beds, native vegetation, and escarpment provide a natural look to the WSA. Mule deer browse the highlands dominated by pinyon pine and juniper trees. Wild horses, deer, cougar, and coyotes can also be seen roaming and living in the playas between mountain ranges. Council Cave near Antelope Peak and the 8,348-foot striated limestone escarpment of Howell Peak can be seen from over 50 miles away.

B. Solitude

About 14,880 acres (including 100 percent of the area proposed for wilderness designation) meet the Wilderness Act standards for solitude, or seclusion from other people.

The WSA is of sufficient size to allow the number of expected visitors to be unaware of others in the vicinity. Rugged terrain, steep cliffs, and pinyon-juniper woodland contribute to solitude in the central portion of the WSA, which

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

is the portion recommended for wilderness.

The Howell Peak WSA is in the South range of the U.S. Air Force (USAF) Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR), one of the country's busiest military air spaces. From 100 to 150 daily flights, 6 days a week, are made in the UTTR. Some flights are as low as 100 feet above ground level. The WSA is within the area of heaviest use, and aircraft occasionally fly directly over the WSA. Although most of these overflights are subsonic and are not directly over the WSA, they can be an annoyance that detracts from but generally does not eliminate overall opportunities for solitude.

About 9,920 acres in the WSA, including the foothills and benchlands not recommended for wilderness designation, do not meet the standards for solitude. The terrain and sparse vegetation in this portion of the WSA do not offer seclusion and roads form most of the eastern and western boundaries.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive, unconfined recreation, although diverse, are not of high quality and were therefore, judged not to be outstanding in this WSA.

D. Special Features

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, both endangered species, and golden eagles, a BLM sensitive species, inhabit the WSA. Candidate threatened or endangered species, that could inhabit the WSA include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, and white-faced ibis. These species also frequent areas throughout the Great Basin and western United States. One candidate (Category 2) plant species, Cryptantha compacta, may occur in the WSA. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

The area that includes the WSA is outstanding in Utah and the country

for Cambrian trilobites. The best specimens found to date were north of the WSA, but about 10 acres of trilobite-bearing beds are in the WSA.

Council Cave, near Antelope Peak, has the largest entrance of any cave in Utah, and is visible for 50 miles. Other caves also have been found in the WSA.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a combination of potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystems not presently represented in Utah or in the NWPS. It would, however, add a PNV ecosystem, saltbush-greasewood, that is not represented in the NWPS in Utah.

PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Ecoregion. The PNV types in the WSA are juniper-pinyon woodland (14,880 acres) and saltbush-greasewood (9,920 acres). The PNV types in the WSA are not widely represented in the NWPS nationally but are well represented in other BLM study areas in Utah and other states. This information is summarized in Table 2, from data compiled in December 1989.

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah; Provo-Orem, Utah; and Las Vegas, Nevada standard metropolitan statistical areas. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	6	93,656	75	2,139,027
Saltbush-Greasewood	3	45,553	37	1,021,687
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	14,955	13	244,553
Saltbush-Greasewood	0	0	7	136,925

Source: BLM File Data.

TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREA	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden	10	1,079,807	78	2,234,875
Provo-Orem	11	708,638	90	2,762,068
Las Vegas, Nevada	38	3,132,130	54	2,134,358

Source: BLM File Data.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

A Howell Peak wilderness would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS in the west central U.S. It would, however, contribute to balancing the NWPS in the Great Basin.

As of January 1987, the NWPS included 16 areas comprising 866,915 acres in Utah and Nevada, the nearest adjacent state. Only six wilderness areas, comprising 272,994 acres, are in the Great Basin.

The 25,500-acre Deseret Peak Wilderness is within 100 miles to the northeast of the WSA, and the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo wilderness is to the east. Both are in National Forests.

No wilderness areas have been designated to the north, west, or south in the vicinity of the WSA. Only three wilderness areas in the NWPS have the same combination of PNV types as the Howell Peak WSA (see "Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems . . ."). All three are in California.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

The portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation can be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. Resource and land conflicts are not now a problem in the WSA and are not anticipated to be in the future.

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

There are 11 post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the portion of the WSA recommended as wilderness. All are subject to the nonimpairment stipulation and can be managed to protect wilderness values. Thirty-five of the 74 mining claims in the WSA are in the area recommended for wilderness, but development is not projected in the foreseeable future and they are not expected to be a manageability problem.

There are two State-owned sections (1,279 acres) in the middle of the southern part of the recommended area. Major developments on these sections and related access and activity would reduce the quality of wilderness values in the southern portion of the wilderness, but the potential for development is low.

Livestock grazing could continue as at present, requiring little or no change in management.

The USAF has stated that military flights will continue in the vicinity of the WSA, whether it is designated or not. Overflights would detract from solitude and BLM management could not mitigate such disturbance. This conflict can be resolved only at the Congressional level.

The area not recommended as wilderness also could be managed as wilderness. There are one oil and gas lease, 39 mining claims, and two State-owned sections in this portion of the WSA, but developments that would reduce the quality of wilderness values are not projected.

It would be administratively more difficult to protect this portion of the WSA from vehicle use and noise because the area is flatter and is bordered by roads. However, significant increases in vehicle use are not projected in the foreseeable future, and surface features such as rock are limiting to vehicle use.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) prepared a mineral assessment report for the Howell Peak WSA (USGS Bulletin 1749-A, David A. Lindsey, et al., 1989). The

report studied the portion of the WSA (14,800 acres) that is recommended for wilderness designation. The report indicates that no mineral production has been recorded for the WSA. Inferred sub-economic resources include high-purity limestone, quartzite, and sand and gravel. Fossils, especially trilobites, of interest to collectors are present in the area. The western part of the study area has moderate potential for undiscovered resources of lead, zinc, copper, molybdenum, silver and gold, including disseminated gold deposits. The potential for undiscovered deposits of high-purity limestone and dolomite and for oil and gas is moderate for the study area. The potential for undiscovered resources of geothermal energy is low. There is no potential for undiscovered resources of coal.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives including designation of the entire area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors concerning this WSA were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 49 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 62 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional input or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

In general, 40 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 16 commenters were not in favor. Six commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on special features present in the WSA and the protection offered by wilderness designation. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from urban areas in Utah. Of particular concern was the need to protect special features and primitive recreational opportunities.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would preclude mineral exploration and development and inhibit woodland harvest. The majority of these commenters were from rural Utah, and were local to the area.

Two Federal agencies (USAF and USBM) commented on the Draft EIS for this WSA. The Federal agencies did not take a position regarding designation or non-designation of the WSA. The USAF noted that low altitude flights will continue over the WSA with or without wilderness designation and that they will not negotiate nor sign any agreement to avoid the proposed wilderness area. This conflict can be resolved only on the Congressional level.

The USBM noted that BLM's Final EIS should include the findings of the USGS and USBM mineral investigations and those findings would be available in November 1988. These findings have been incorporated into the Final EIS and study report. The USBM also commented that BLM had understated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are four State sections (2,559 acres) in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State commented that the Howell Peak WSA has outstanding wilderness values and an overall low degree of

conflicts compared to other WSAs in the region. The State noted that the partial wilderness alternative would exclude areas of low wilderness quality which are probably unmanageable as wilderness due to ease of access by OHV use, and would minimize potential conflicts with mineral and livestock interests. Specific State comments on the Draft EIS dealt with suggested wording changes in the discussion on endangered plants, addition of information on locatable minerals, and potential installation of a USAF communication facility on State land near the WSA.

The Millard County Master Plan does not specifically address wilderness. The Millard County Commission favors protection of natural and esthetic resources on public lands as well as multiple use and believes that these objectives can be met without wilderness designation. The Commission has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation for BLM lands in Utah.

HOWELL PEAK WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Alternatives		
	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (14,800 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (24,800 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would be preserved in the designated area which is about 58 percent of the WSA. Vehicular use of 4 miles of ways in the nondesignated area would continue to detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation. No significant disturbance of wilderness values is anticipated in the foreseeable future. Continued vehicular use of about 7 miles of ways would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	Wilderness designation would preserve wilderness values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and special features.
Impacts on Livestock Management	Effects would be the same as for the All Wilderness Alternative.	Livestock grazing would not be adversely affected because management type access would continue as at present.	Restrictions could inconvenience livestock operators. Management costs and sheep losses to predators could increase slightly.

HOWELL PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Appendix

Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Non-Federal Holdings Within Areas Recommended for Designation ^a

Legal Description (Prior to any Subdivision)	Total Acreage	Number of Owners (If Parcel has been subdivided)	Type of Ownership by Estate (Federal, State, Private, Other) (Surface Estate) (Subsurface Estate)	Presently Proposed for Acquisition (Yes , No)	Preferred Method of Acquisition (Purchase, Exchange, Other)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Land Costs)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Processing Costs)
T. 17 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 36	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 18 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 2	639.30		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000

^a The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a Federal appraised value of the land or mineral estate, but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-Federal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.